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November 21, 2014

The Honorable Terry Branstad  
Governor, State of Iowa  
1007 East Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Governor Branstad,

This letter is sent on behalf of the Iowa Council on Homelessness, pursuant to *Iowa Code Sections 16.100A(9)(a) and 16.100A(8)(g)*, which direct us to advise the Governor's Office and make annual recommendations regarding strategies to prevent and eliminate homelessness in Iowa.

The Iowa Council on Homelessness is committed to ensuring all Iowans have access to safe, decent, and affordable housing, as well as to reducing and ending homelessness. Those affected include veterans, domestic violence victims, individuals suffering from mental illness, persons experiencing a loss of income, and those suffering from other tragedies that create homelessness.

As a state, we are moving in the right direction and making measurable progress in reducing homelessness, however, the most recent report by the Institute for Community Alliances indicates a slight increase in the number of homeless households over the past year. So, there is still work to be accomplished.

Iowa's service providers work daily with public and private partners in the community to best utilize the limited resources that are available to prevent and reduce homelessness.

We rely heavily on our collaborative relationships with our colleagues from the Iowa Finance Authority and Institute for Community Alliances for their support and dedication. We are deeply grateful for the professionalism, administrative support, technical and financial assistance, and partnership provided by the Iowa Finance Authority.

We thank you for your leadership and your administration's investment in improving coordinated service delivery to Iowa's homeless. In the past year, *Standards for Homelessness Programs* was written and approved by the Iowa Council on Homelessness (ICH) in an effort to outline consistent expectations for operations, services and performance of Iowa's homeless shelters, housing programs, outreach services, and prevention programs. (Please see enclosure for a copy of the *Standards for Homelessness Programs*.) The creation of these standards was possible due to your support and the ICH partnerships with the Iowa Finance Authority and the State Public Policy Group (SPPG). Through your ongoing support, we are in the process of implementing the next phase of this project. The next phase is the creation of a written manual, supportive material and technical assistance to guide homeless service organizations in implementing the recommended standards.

In addition, ICH members continue to participate in planning and working committees with a focus on the following: (1) creation and implementation of a coordinated community intake and process to streamline the process for Iowans who are homeless or potentially homeless seeking shelter, housing and services; (2) raising awareness on homelessness, needs of Iowans who are homeless; and how to end homelessness, and (3) creation and submission of an annual coordinated Iowa Balance of State Continuum of Care application package to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for funding for supportive housing and services. This application shows the communitywide commitment to ending homelessness and provides funding for these efforts. All of the working committees demonstrate

Theresa Armstrong

Iowa

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Consumer Representative

Allan Axen, Immediate Past Chair  
RetiredZebulon Beilke-McCallum  
Iowa Coalition Against Domestic ViolenceDavid Binner  
Wells FargoJulie Bockenstedt  
Humility of Mary Housing/ShelterDavid Boss  
Northeast Iowa Community Action Corp.Bill Brand  
Iowa Department of Human RightsAnne Brown  
Iowa Department of CorrectionsBen Brustkern, Vice-Chair  
Cedar Valley Friends of the FamilyChristina Canganelli  
Shelter HouseJamie Cashman  
Iowa State Association of CountiesChris Coleman  
Iowa League of CitiesCarrie Dunnwald  
Cedar Valley Friends of the FamilyJane Erickson  
Iowa Department on AgingMarileigh Fisher  
Community Housing InitiativesKarin Ford  
Iowa Department of Public HealthDonna Grgrulich  
Iowa Economic Development AuthorityDavid Hagen  
Hawkeye Area Community Action ProgramKristine Harris  
Consumer RepresentativeAnn Hearn  
Linn County Community ServicesSandra Johnson  
Iowa Department of EducationRhonda Jordal  
Family Alliance for Veterans of AmericaBarb Kellogg  
North Iowa Community Action  
OrganizationTom Lampe  
Iowa Department of Public SafetyDennis Lauterbach  
Lutheran Services in IowaScott Mather  
Iowa Workforce DevelopmentStefanie Munsterman-Robinson  
Cedar Rapids Civil Rights CommissionWes Peterson  
Iowa Finance AuthorityDonna Phillips, Chair  
Iowa Office of the Attorney GeneralAmy Rawhouser  
Consumer RepresentativeNancy Schulze  
Heartland Family ServiceAshley Schwalm  
Family ResourcesMichelle South  
Consumer Representative

Bob Steben

Iowa

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Central Iowa Shelter &amp; Services

Roberta Wahl  
Des Moines Area Community CollegeTim Wilson, Secretary  
Willis Dady Emergency ShelterAmber Lewis, Coordinator  
Iowa Finance Authority

800.432.7230

515.725.4900

2015 Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50312

efforts by ICH members to improve the response, resources and services provided to lowans who are homeless or on the brink of becoming homeless.

To continue to assist lowans who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless, the Iowa Council on Homelessness has the following recommendations for your consideration:

- increase availability of housing units and provide rent assistance for low-income households.
- add a check-box option to Iowa Income Tax 1040 form, giving individuals the opportunity to contribute to homeless services in their region;
- secure adequate funding and resources to address domestic violence and mental illness, which are leading contributors to homelessness; and
- continue to provide leadership in convening key agencies and individuals to assess federal funding opportunities and possibly increase state funding for homeless programs; and
- take a leadership role in finding alternatives to criminalization of homelessness and oppose efforts to further criminalize homelessness.

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~~We further ask the Governor to take a leadership role to in supporting bipartisan legislation in policies that find alternatives to avoid to unnecessary criminalization eviction by and to protecting the rights of residents, tenants and landlords to summon the police and emergency assistance without penalty. We recognize T sometimes tenants can should not face eviction for the simple act of calling the police and this tends to create additional obstacles to their exit from homelessness.~~

Homeless service providers in our state address the needs of some of our most vulnerable lowans. Together we help men, women and their families to get back on their feet and move beyond homelessness - keeping children in school; getting adults back to work; providing access to health services and resources for veterans, the disabled and elderly; and helping move individuals and families into their own homes. Homeless service providers strive to not only improve the quality of life of the individuals and families that come through their doors, but also to improve the community as a whole.

On behalf of the Iowa Council of Homelessness, I thank you for your continued funding and investment in homeless services for all lowans especially some of our most vulnerable. We recognize, however, that the executive branch requires partnership with the legislature to enact policy and legislation that ultimately improves the quality of life of lowans. Know that we will be raising the issues above with legislators as well as other issues affecting those we serve, such as raising the minimum wage and tax incentives for businesses hiring homeless persons and particularly homeless veterans. We will focus on engaging legislators on March 18, 2015 through our annual Day on the Hill to advocate on behalf of lowans experiencing homelessness. The Iowa Council on Homelessness will hold a regular meeting that day at 10:00 a.m. at the Iowa Finance Authority and on behalf of the Council, I hereby extend an invitation to you to join us at that meeting to respond to this report and make additional remarks. Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information or concerns related to the work of the Iowa Council of Homelessness at (515) 242-5121 or by e-mail at Donna.Phillips@Iowa.gov.

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Sincerely,

Donna J. Phillips,  
Chair, Iowa Council on Homelessness

Enclosure

Ccc: Iowa Finance Authority

Institute for Community Alliances  
State Public Policy Group  
Iowa Council on Homelessness Members